

# **POLITICS OF CONVERSION**

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### III

## Genesis and History of the Politics of Conversion

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While Mao-tse Tung was licking his wounds after the long march to his hideout in Yen-an, an American journalist asked him the following question: “A lot of people in the USA have been led to believe by our liberals that you people are not communists, but only agrarian reformers. What do you have to say on that subject?” Mao-tse Tung smiled mischievously and said: “So long as the belief helps the revolution, we do not care what the sons-of-bitches believe about us.”

The Christian missionary and the muslim *Mulla* in India can comfortably express the same sentiment about the Hindus who have been led to believe that Christianity and Islam are religions towards which Hindu society should practice the *samabhava* (sentiment of equal honour) as the various sects of *Sanatana-Dharma* have been practising towards each other throughout Hindu history. Neither the missionary nor the *mulla* will concede for a moment that any Hindu religious sect can claim to be a religion. Neither of them will grant to any Hindu religious sect even the status of an inferior religion. Any missionary who is honest to his calling will confirm that, according to Christianity,

the whole of Hinduism is heathenism, which word the dictionaries define as the condition of those who are devoid of any religion whatsoever. Any mulla who knows his *kalmia* will clarify that, according to Islam, the whole of Hinduism is *kufr* which means “a wilful denial of the one and only true revelation.”

Nor is the missionary or the *mulla* prepared to practise *samabhava* towards any Hindu religious sect. Each of them pleads his helplessness in this respect because his “scriptures” do not sanction such “sophistry”. And each of them appeals to the Hindus to understand his position and help him honour the fundamentals of his faith. The faith of the missionary as also of the *mulla* makes it obligatory on him to convert to his own creed as many Hindus as he can, by all means including force and fraud. The Hindus are expected to understand, indeed appreciate, this obligation also as a proof positive of the missionary’s and the *mulla*’s profound devotion to his own religion. But both of them deny to the Hindus the same right to convert any of their followers to the latter’s ancestral faith. Each of them points out that apostasy is punishable with death according to the fundamentals of his faith. The fact that the missionary or the *mulla* cannot enforce these fundamentals under the present dispensation in India does not mean that the fundamentals have become invalid or should be refashioned. It only means that the Christians or the muslims should strive to change the dispensation so that they can enforce the fundamentals without let or hindrance.

Meanwhile, both of them hail as very helpful the Hindu slogan of *sarva-dharma-samabhava* (all religions are equal). The slogan proves, if proof was needed, that the Hindus do not mind some of their own flock going over to Christianity

or Islam. It does not, should not, make a difference to a Hindu if he becomes a christian or a muslim. Do not the Hindus proclaim, day and night and from the house-tops, that Christianity and Islam are as good religious as their own *Sanatana Dharma*?

Hindu society is thus trapped by a slogan which it has itself coined and made respectable. It cannot turn away from practising *samabhava* towards Christianity and Islam even when these creeds decimate Hindu society by continuous conversions. Nor can it expect *samabhava* from Christianity or Islam when it tries to win back some of its own lost sheep. In such a situation, Christianity as well as Islam can resort to violence which is legitimate according to the fundamental tenets of these faiths.

It is the same sort of trap into which a democracy gets entangled the moment it concedes that communism is also a political ideology as good as the democratic ideology, and that a communist party should be permitted to function as freely as any democratic party. Communism also pleads that its very first premises put it under an obligation to destroy democracy, and that a democracy, by its very definition, is duty-bound to facilitate the spread of communism. And a communist party can legitimately take to the path of an armed struggle whenever a democracy tries to deny this fundamental democratic right to the party.

### **Meaning of Meenakshipuram**

The mass conversions at Meenakshipuram seem to have shaken Hindu society out of its sloganized slumber. But the credit for this shock-therapy should go to the spokesmen of Islam, in India and abroad. Hindu society would have taken these conversions also in its stride, as in the past, had not

the spokesmen of Islam proclaimed publicly that mass conversion of the weaker sections of Hindu society was part of a political plan to win power for Islam, and convert secular India into an Islamic state.

Hindu society has had a full and first-hand taste of an Islamic state in the not too distant past. But it is doubtful if the spectre of such a state would have haunted Hindu Society, had not Pakistan and Iran demonstrated the model with such earnest showmanship.

As a cumulative effect of all these events, a new phrase has gained currency in India's prevalent political parlance — *the politics of conversion*. What was regarded as a religious event till recently has now come to be recognized as a political event. This is a great gain. But it is only the advent of an awakening which would have to go a long way before it achieves an adequate perspective. For, Meenakshipuram has only dramatized a process of subversion which has been preying upon Hindu society for well-nigh thirteen hundred years.

The first current of this process entered India in the persons of muslim merchants and sufis who settled down in several parts of India, particularly Kerala, in the second half of the seventh century A.D. It surged forward when an Arab army under Mohammed bin Qasim succeeded in securing a foothold on the soil of Sindh in the first quarter of the 8th century. It overflowed the ramparts in our North-West when Kabul and Zabul were overrun by the Islamized Turks in the second half of the 10th century. It reached the heartland of India at the close of the 12th century and spread eastwards and southwards till it touched every nook and corner of this ancient land.

The tide turned at the end of the 17th century A.D. But in the meanwhile large sections of Hindus in the East and the West had been alienated from their ancestral

religion and culture. The separation of Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh from Bharatavarsha was at one time regarded as the culmination of this current. But the consolidation of its aggression has not made it content with what it has already submerged. It is now looking forward to engulfing for good the residue that is Hindustan.

Another current of this process of subversion entered India in the wake of the Portuguese, Dutch, French and British adventurers. A horde of missionaries belonging to different denominations of Christianity and coming from many Western countries including the Americas, swarmed towards our shores. Christianity secured firm footholds in Southern, Central and North-Eastern India while Western imperialism was ruling the roost. By the middle of the twentieth century Western imperialism was dead and gone. But the missionaries continued to multiply. Their experience over the past five hundred years has emboldened them to envisage a day when India will become yet another christian colony.

The process cannot be understood fully and in its inherent dynamics if we keep our gaze confined to what Christianity and Islam have been doing in India. We would have to travel backwards in time and go to the beginnings when the politics of conversion was first perfected in the garb of religion and projected into the midst of the pagan societies as unsuspecting as Hindu society. In India itself the politics of conversion is thirteen hundred years old in the case of Islam, and nearly five hundred years old in the case of Christianity. But India is a late-comer in this maelstrom. The world at large has been familiar with the politics of conversion for almost two thousand years. Whole continents had already been conquered by means of this politics before it arrived in India.



The first principles of the politics of conversion were formulated by the founding fathers of the Christian church in the very first century of what has become known as the Christian era. Its methods were perfected in ancient Alexandria, Antioch, Athens, Rome, Carthage and Constantinople, over a period of 300 years, at the end of which it conquered the Roman empire. In the next 700 years, it conquered the whole of Europe from Ireland to the Urals and from the North Sea to the Mediterranean. It started surging towards distant shores at the beginning of the 16th century and, in the course of the next 300 years, it conquered North and South America, the West Indies, the Caribbeans, Iceland, Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines and several parts of Africa. Its impact was now being felt in the rest of Africa and over the whole of Asia.

Meanwhile, another politics of conversion was taking shape in Medina in the second quarter of the 7th century. By the end of that quarter it engulfed the whole of Arabia, Palestine, Syria, Iraq, Iran Egypt. In the next one hundred years it conquered the whole of North Africa, Sicily, Spain, Khorasan and Turkistan, and entered India via Sindh. In the course of the next few hundred years it conquered Asia Minor, Malaya and Indonesia, and invaded the Philippines where it was rebuffed by Christianity which was already getting entrenched in that land.

The same thing happened in Asia Minor and the Balkans. Their fortunes waxed and waned for several hundred years. Christianity came out victorious in the final round at the close of the 15th century and resumed its conquest of the New World which had just come under its purview. Now the Islamic politics has revived and is competing with its sister faith on more than equal terms in Africa and India. The petro-dollars have come as a timely shot in the arm of Islam.

It would be interesting to survey the genesis and history of the politics of conversion which pass as Christianity and Islam. In the process we will discover the fundamental formulas and the mature methods developed and employed by the two for achieving what they have already achieved and what they aim at in future. The discovery may be useful to Hindu society in its encounter with these subversive techniques.

### **Politics of Conversion Called Christianity**

Christianity generally describes itself as the Church. The designation is derived from the Greek “Kuros” which mean “mighty”. The Greek word is a cognate of the Sanskrit “shoora” which signifies a “warrior”. Militancy is thus inbuilt in the psychology which projected this platform.

There is no evidence that Jesus, the son of Joseph and Mary, had any intention to found a religious order or sect. The gospels, even when a lot of their language has got garbled in the mouths of their narrators, reveal him primarily as a mystic. He gave to his people, the Jews, the usual spiritual message—the Kingdom of Heaven is not to be sought in the world outside, the world of space and time; the Kingdom is with us, in our hearts, and also near at hand for all those who see it in right earnest.

Moreover, Jesus was too much of a free spiritual seeker to become the founder of any closed community or organization, far less the founder of a farflung monolith like the later-day christian Church. Those passages in the gospels which Church cites as its source and inspiration are after-thought on the very face of it. The passages do not fit in psychically with the rest of what Jesus had to say. The responsibility for converting Jesus into the “only son of god” rests upon his disciples, and also upon Paul, whom the



Church hailed as apostles in later history. Christian theology—dogmatics, polemics, apologetics and the rest—is not even remotely related to what Jesus had stated about himself or about God or about the World.

It is significant that all disciples of Jesus ran away or repudiated him when the temple guards of Jerusalem came to arrest him. None of them was present when Jesus was crucified, except John who watched from a safe distance. The body of Jesus was taken down from the cross and entombed by two kindly Jews who had some influence with the Roman governor. Again, none of the disciples accompanied the three women—Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome—who went to visit the tomb of Jesus two days later.

Yet as soon as the disciples were sure that Jesus was dead and could not contradict them, they started proclaiming that Jesus had appeared to them in a vision, that Jesus had bodily risen into heaven before their eyes, and that the Holy Spirit which was of Jesus had entered into them. They flocked back to Jerusalem after the dust of controversy about Jesus had settled down. And they now claimed that they had been endowed by the Holy Spirit with miraculous powers of inspiration, speech and healing!

Saul, who became known as Paul in Christian history, was not even a disciple of Jesus. He had not met Jesus during the latter's life-time. Stephen, a disciple of Jesus had enraged the Jew in Jerusalem by abusing them for their failure to recognise Jesus as the Messiah. He was sentenced to death by stoning. Saul participated in carrying out the sentence. Saul now traveled to Damascus to kill some more followers of Jesus whom he suspected to be hiding in the city. Something happened to him outside

Damascus, or so he claimed. Most probably it was the guilt of killing Stephen which had surfaced. In any case, Saul reincarnated himself as Paul and proclaimed that Jesus *was* the Son of God!

Paul travelled to many cities in Palestine, Syria, Asia Minor and Greece wherever some Jewish communities were to be found. He made some converts to his new-fangled faith. But, by and large, the Jews were not prepared to listen to him. Paul got so angry at this attitude of the Jews as to announce that henceforth men were to be saved not by the Mosaic Law but only by an active faith in Christ as the Son of God. Jesus had by now been transformed into Christ, the anointed one.

There was a great stir amongst the Jews everywhere when they learnt that Paul had repudiated the law of Moses. Paul's life was now in danger, wherever he went, which seems to have had a very sobering effect on him. He rushed back to Jerusalem and offered to repent and undergo the rites of purification at the Temple. The Jews, however, were in no mood to be mollified. He was about to be flogged on order from a Roman magistrate when he revealed that he was the son of a Roman citizen and that, as such, he was entitled to a trial in Rome. That is how he secured a safe conduct to the imperial city.

It is from Rome that Paul fired a number of frenzied letters to Jewish communities elsewhere. The Church eulogized these letters and incorporated them in the *New Testament*. It is in these letters that we find the first formulations of what became a full-fledged but completely closed Christian theology in due course. It is in these letters that, having finally despaired of the Jews, he wrote: "Understand, then, that this message of God's salvation has been sent to the heathen. They will listen to it."

### **Contours of Christian Theology**

According to Paul, every man born of woman inherited the guilt of Adam and could be saved from eternal damnation only by the atoning death of Christ. Christ was the Wisdom of God as also the first born Son of God. Christ was before all things, in him all things existed; through him all things had been created. Christ was not the Messiah who would deliver the Jews from bondage; he was the Logos who had become flesh and whose death would deliver all men. Paul also promised that “the Lord is coming soon” and that the “appointed time has grown very short.” On second thoughts, he amended that the second coming of Christ would be delayed until after Satan appeared on the scene and “proclaims himself to be God”.

John, called Son of Thunder in christian tradition, took up from where Paul had left. Pointing towards Nero and Rome, he proclaimed that the Satan and his regime of wickedness had already arrived. The Roman empire, he thundered, was headed towards some great calamities in which all except the christians would perish. The last judgement would come after a thousand years when the dead would be raised from their graves; all those whose names were not entered in the Book of Life would be “flung into a burning lake of fire and brimstone”. The Christians would then “gather for God’s great banquet and will eat the bodies of kings, commanders and mighty men... the bodies of all men who have not heeded the call of Christ”. Next, a “New Jerusalem would descend on earth” which would be inherited by the Christians who would not know “death any longer, not night, nor any grief or pain”.

This theology of great promise for the Christians and greath punishment for the rest of mankind, was more or

less complete in its essentials by the time John died towards the end of first century A.D. It had borrowed some of the language of later-day Greco philosophies like Neo-Platonism, as also some symbols from the mysticism of Egypt, Persia and Asia Minor. The language and the symbolism has led people to give a mystic meaning to this theology. They forget that the founding fathers had formulated it as literally and historically true. That is why the Church had always laid such great emphasis on the historicity of Jesus who ascended the cross to become the Christ.

Human reason revolves round concrete evidence, empirical or mystical, and has no use for affirmations of mere faith, however hysterical or high-sounding. But Christian theology had no use for human reason in the realm of its dogma, though it used this reason to the point of casuistry when it came to its own polemics and apologetics. It was based upon a denial of human reason from the first day of its birth in the fevered brains of people like Paul and John. The theologians who followed made this lack of reason the basis of an inverted snobbery. Tertullian, a theologian from Carthage, summed up the case for Christianity when he said: "God's Son died; it is believable because it is absurd. He was buried and rose again; it is certain because it is unbelievable." Who could beat that in a debate based upon evidence of human experience, and human reason?

Human reason is also the basis of a true universalism. True universalism recognizes that although basic human nature is the same, always and everywhere, yet different human beings dwell at different stages of development—mental, moral, psychic and spiritual—and, therefore, stand in need of a diversity of doctrines, philosophies, aspirations,

godheads, and ways of worship. Pagan religions of Europe, Africa and Asia, which Christianity destroyed in due course, recognized this true universalism and, therefore, caused no conflict between different communities or wars between different nations on account of religion. Christianity, on the other hand, propounded only one historical personality as the *sole* saviour, propounded only one theology as the infallible gateway to God, and propped up only church as exclusive trustee of truth. It was a very gross violation of universalism. It divided humanity into christians and non-christians. Christians were now called upon to convert or kill all those who differed from them. At the same time, Christian theologians went about boasting that their creed and church were the harbingers of universalism in human history!

History is a witness that all doctrines, however fantastic or fanciful, have found their fans (or victims) in all societies. Kautilya has elaborated in his *Arthashastra* the psychological principles which alienate some people from their own society, and lead them straight into the lap of those who are out to subvert that society. The first group of people who can be alienated are the *maneevarga*, that is, those who are conceited and complain that they have been denied what is their due on account of birth, brains or qualities of character. The second group consists of the *kruddhavarga*, that is, those who are self-righteous, who claim that they alone know how to set things right and who become angry because the powers that be do not listen to them. The third group comprises the *lubdhavarga*, that is, those who put a price on everything and sell themselves to whosoever can pay the price. The fourth group is the *bheetavarga*, that is, those who have committed crimes, are afraid of being caught and, therefore, collaborate with



whosoever is out to overthrow the existing order and the laws which threaten them.

A study of the Roman scene in the three centuries preceding the Christian takeover at Constantinople in 323 A.D., leaves a strong impression that the Church was instinctively employing the psychological principles propounded by Kautilya. The pagan societies in the Roman empire were encumbered with an elite which had become spiritually bankrupt, morally neutral, and devoid of intellectual discrimination. The common people in these societies loved their gods, flocked to their temples, and rejoiced in their sacrifices and religious procession. But most members of the elite, who had been educated in schools set up by a variety of sophists, could no longer find any satisfaction in the hallowed traditions of their society, nor harbour any aspiration beyond personal ambition for power and pelf.

Christian missionaries could find quite a few and easy converts amongst these upper classes precisely because the Church had declared war on their society. Christian theology helped these converts to betray their Gods, their culture and their country, with a clean conscience; they could now believe that the betrayal was in the interests of a “higher cause” and a “loftier purpose”. Incidentally, it also helped the upper classes to avoid military service to a state which the Church had placed under a taboo. Like the later-day hippies in the United States of America, the upper classes were now free to “make love instead of war”.

### **Myth of Christian Martyrdom**

Christian historians have made much of the “martyrdom” suffered by the early Christians under several Roman regimes. No pagan records have survived to tell the



other side of the story. But the Christian records themselves provide ample evidence as to who was the sinner and who the sinned-against. The Christians abused and poured contempt upon the pagan Gods and Goddesses in the foulest possible language. They denounced pagan culture as degenerate, devilish and immoral. They called upon all christians not to render military service or pay taxes to a regime run by what they described as the Antichrist and the Devil, John described Rome as the “harlot who sins on the great waters, with whom kings of the earth have committed fornication”; Rome was the “Whore of Babylon”, he wrote. Roman society was not yet entirely dead and it was but natural that some Romans reacted strongly against their enemies and in their own defence, every now and then.

Roman records which have survived also show that it was not the ruling classes but the common people who reacted against christian aggression. Mob action against christians in many a city street forced the hands of authority quite a few times. But, by and large, the upper classes either remained indifferent, or smiled indulgently on what they regarded as a conflict between tweedledum and tweedledee, or privately advised the christians not to provoke the “mob”. The common people thus found themselves leaderless and felt bewildered in the face of apathy on the part of rulers whom they regarded as their own. On the other hand, the “martyrdom” suffered by the christians, who were in a minority for quite some time, evoked sympathy for them, particularly amongst the upper class women whose hearts “bled for innocent victims of mob violence.”

The Christian minority succeeded in the long run because of the two peculiar methods it used—methods

with which the pagan societies were unfamiliar, and which these societies did not know how to counter.

First, the concept of a wholetime missionary, who had nothing to do except convert people, was unknown to pagan societies. These societies had their priests who helped them perform certain religious rites, at home as well as at places of public worship and pilgrimage. But the priests themselves were householders who had many other thing to do besides helping their patrons. The saints, mystics and philosophers in these societies advised those who visited them about methods of self-improvement or the paths towards spiritual progress. Neither did they know, nor did they have the aptitude to train their devotees in the art of combat against a rival creed. The christian missionary thus found the field free for practising his casuistry on simple and straight-forward people who could neither argue with him till the end of time, nor put up a show of piety at which the missionary was a past-master.

### **The Christian Church: A State Within A State**

Secondly, the christian missionaries went on organizing into a monolithic and militant Church the community of their converts. The Church was created after the pattern of the Roman empire—territorially as well as administratively. The entire imperial territory, at the centre as well as in the provinces, was divided into parishes, dioceses, districts and other divisions over which priests, deacons, archdeacons, bishops, prelates and archbishops presided with despotic power derived from a “divine revelation”. In due course, the Church could raise its own resources, provide for an increasing number of missionaries, build monasteries full of militant monks, and sent money to christian

communities in poorer places. The roads, sea-routes and other means of communications, which the Roman state had built and devised for its own use, also became vehicles of the fast spreading christian creed. The pagan people, on the other hand, were divided into many communities each of which led its own life in terms of its own cultural traditions. They were hardly in a position to withstand the christian onslaught which went on gaining might and momentum with the passing of every year.

These methods of the Church were matured and made progressively more powerful in the midst of heresy-hunting and schisms which were inevitable in a community which looked with suspicion on every departure from dogma, and every innovation in ritual. Far from weakening the Church, these recurring quarrels made it ever more ruthless towards those whom it regarded as its enemies. Dogma was doggedly tailored to the needs of Church authority and the authority in turn served the spread of dogma with an uncompromising zeal.

By the end of the 3rd century A.D., the Church had become not only a powerful edifice next only to the imperial government itself, but had also evolved a well-defined dogma deceptively dressed in the language of Greek philosophy and Egyptian mysticism. No wonder that it started finding an increasing number of adherents amongst merchants who had money, amongst politicians who wielded power, amongst military commanders who were superstitious or in need of popular support, and amongst gilded ladies who were out to make the best of both the worlds.

The mother of emperor Severus (222-235 A.D.) had become a disciple of Origen, a well-known christian

theologian. Emperor Philip the Arabian (240-249 A.D.) had himself become a Christian. The wife of emperor Galerius implored him, when he fell sick in 311 A.D. to make peace with the “undefeated God of the Christian”. He promulgated an edict recognizing Christianity as a legitimate religion, immediately before he died the same year. Helena the mother of Constantine, who converted the Roman empire into a Christian theocracy, was a Christian convert and exercised considerable influence in the counsels of her son.

### **Divine Right of Kings**

Scholars have debated the question whether the conversion of Constantine was religious or political. It is difficult to give a definite answer at this distance in time, more so because the evidence is conflicting. But one thing which decided Constantine in favour of Christianity was the *divine right of kings* coupled with *dynastic succession*—a dogma which the Church had evolved and was prepared to extend to any contender for power who accepted Christianity as the state religion.

The Roman state had continued to pretend to be a republic long after it had become an imperial edifice for all practical purposes. But there was no dynastic succession and no divine right of kings known to Roman political parlance. Every emperor had to wade his way through blood before he could ascend the imperial throne. Constantine saw the future of his family as well as of his own imperial power bound with the Christian dogma of dynastic succession and the divine right of kings. He removed his capital from Rome to Constantinople to avoid resistance which was likely to be stronger in the former city.

And he succeeded in the gamble with the help of the Church.

But Constantine was not the last to sanctify his imperial crown with the insignia of the Church. In the years to come, the kings of Celts, Franks, Anglo-Saxons, Germans, Bulgars, Danes and Slavs solicited and obtained the aid of the same Church to proclaim absolute power over their subjects. A king in these pagan societies was only the first amongst equals, and he could be dethroned if he fell foul of the time honoured tradition of allowing autonomy to local units. The Church helped these democratic monarchs to become unbridled despots who, in turn, helped the Church to stamp out all pagan practices—religious, cultural and social.

### **Destruction of Pagan Religions**

The pattern followed by the Christianized monarchies vis-a-vis pagan religions was the same in every country of Asia, Africa and Europe.

To start with, the pagan temples were closed, pagan processions were prohibited, pagan sacrifices were declared sacrilegious, pagan priests were deprived of the privileges which they had enjoyed since times immemorial, and state patronage of pagan schools was withdrawn. Simultaneously, finances were made available for building christian churches, seminaries and monasteries; christian ceremonies and public festivals were patronized by kings, princes and princesses; christian sacraments were made obligatory on all citizens; and Christian priests and monks were granted special privilege such as non-payment of state taxes and non-performance of public duties. The Church was permitted to inherit extensive properties from



those who wanted to will that way. Soon it became a device to save properties from being sequestered to the state. Those who could not inherit properties legally got them willed to the Church which they themselves joined in some capacity or the other. And the Church was also allowed to hear and decide such legal disputes as were brought before it by the citizens.

In the next round, the pagan temples were demolished or converted into christian churches; properties attached to pagan shrines were transferred to the christian shrines; pagan scriptures were burnt; and pagan priests were killed unless they agreed to get converted. The campaigns for destruction of pagan temples, burning of pagan scriptures, and killing or converting of pagan priests were announced and sanctioned by the hierarchs of the Church and the christian mobs who carried out the commands, particularly in the countryside, were mostly led by christian monks living in the fast multiplying monasteries.

It would be a long story if we were to relate, country by country, what the Church did to pagan religions and cultures, prevalent from times immemorial, in Europe, Asia Minor, Syria, Egypt and North Africa. It is a story of how the Church subverted one pagan society after another; how hundreds of thousands of pagan temples and sacred shrines were destroyed; how millions of “heathens” were dispatched to the “christian hell” by fire and sword; and how the last vestiges of every pagan religion and culture were stamped out.

What is still more painful about this story is how some of the savages and lunatics who instigated, inspired, sanctioned and supported this sanguine saga were sanctified as saints by the Church. Many pious people are



impressed as soon as they find the letters “St.” added to a name. They would be shocked if they found out what the honorific hides most of the time.

On top of it all, the Church labeled the pagan people as “barbarians” who had “invaded” the then “civilized world” of the Roman Empire. Scholars in several European countries have now delved deeper into the pre-christian past of their societies. The evidence they have pieced together about the quality and character of the pagan people tells an altogether different story. It was not the pagans but the christians who were the first barbarians in human history. The doubtful distinction of passing off politics under the cloak of religion must go to the christian Church in ancient and medieval Europe.

### **Christianity in the New World**

There was no scope left for expansion after 1000 A.D. or thereabout, because its path towards the East and the South had, meanwhile, been blocked by another though similar politics which had taken shape on the sands of Arabia. The new world of the Americas, Australia and New Zealand and the old world of Africa, India, Southeast Asia and the Far East were not yet accessible to the Church, though its individual missionaries were mapping out the scene in different Asian countries. Meanwhile, Christianity had become more and more brutalized as a result of several centuries of heresy-hunting, inquisition and the burning of “witches”. Spain and Portugal were in the van of this process of brutalization.

It was the Spaniards who discovered America towards the close of the 15th century A.D. about the same time the Portuguese travelled round the western and southern

coast of Africa to reach South India, Ceylon, Burma, Malaya, Indonesia, Indochina, Korea, China and Japan. The Philippines were soon to be invaded by the Spaniards who crossed the Pacific from their base in Mexico. The missionaries found that all these countries and continents were inhabited by pagan societies as unsuspecting as the pagan societies of ancient Europe, Asia Minor, Egypt and North Africa. The politics of conversion called Christianity started playing its game once again, and over a far larger field. The Pope in Rome drew a line on a certain longitude, and handed over the two hemispheres to the two Christian nations—Spain and Portugal.

As soon as the Spaniards saw the vast expanse of North, Central and South America, they were filled with the conviction that it was the very land which their “Lord God” had “promised” to them at the dawn of human history. The “divine promise” was all the more promising because of the plenty of gold it contained, particularly in those parts which later became known as Mexico, Peru and Guatemala. The Red Indians who inhabited these lands appeared to be intruders to the Spaniards. At least that is how the sailors and soldiers of the Church argued amongst themselves. The fact that these Red Indians were welcoming the Christians with open arms, and offering them plenty of gifts including gold, did not change the situation. It only confirmed that the lands for which the Red Indians were not prepared to fight could not really belong to them.

The slaughter and pillage that followed all over America—north, centre and south—still remains unparalleled in the annals of human history. It was a slaughter of unarmed people who had given no provocation, and who were prepared to share with the

Spaniards whatever wealth they had. Their only “crime” was that they were not christians and the “Lord God” had not “promised” to them the lands on which they had lived for untold ages.

The Red Indians who escaped the sword of the Christian soldiers were enslaved by the plantation pioneers who followed soon after. The missionaries, in their turn, found a rich harvest for conversion in these harassed human beings. The “poor devils” had lost everything in this life. Their bodies were not likely to last for long under the lashes of the Christian slave-drivers. But their souls could be saved for a life everlasting after the second coming of Christ. Meanwhile, the Portuguese were selling to the Spaniards a lot more slaves which the former had captured from all over Africa. The missionaries had their hands full with the work of saving souls.

In course of time, the Christians from Spain were joined by many more from other European countries—particularly the Catholics from France and the Protestants from Great Britain. They frequently came to blows over the division of the land and the loot. But none of them had a thought to spare for the Red Indians who, in due course, almost disappeared from North America and whose remnants were converted to christianity in Central and South America. It was only when the Dark Age, ushered in by Christianity, came to a close towards the end of the eighteenth century that the Red Indians were recognised as human beings, equal to the christians who had killed most of them and enslaved the rest. But the Church was not prepared to concede that its mission amongst the Red Indians had been anything except a mission of “Christian mercy”. The Church kept on brandishing its belief that the great Mayan culture in Central America was a species of

“barbarism”, specializing in “human sacrifices” at the alter of its “blood-thirsty” gods. The Church was to tell similar stories about the Hindus, though in less loud tones, because the Hindus were soon in a position to hit back.

### **Christian Politics of Conversion in Asia**

Due to a number of circumstances, the Portuguese did not do so well in the lands which the Pope had bequeathed to them. But they had an ample opportunity to practise the politics of conversion along the Western coast of India. Francis Xavier who presided over this politics for a few years had the Christian satisfaction of demolishing a number of Hindu temples in South India and seeing several thousand “heathens”<sup>4</sup> slaughtered in Goa. He invited the king of Spain to use the secular arm for the spread of christianity in India. The Church sanctified him as the “Patron Saint of the East”, and his corpse was enshrined in Goa, to be worshipped in perpetuity by the victims of his politics.

By the time the French, the British and the Dutch appeared on the Eastern scene, Christianity had been found out in the West for what it had always been in fact—power-hungry politics masquerading as religion. The later-day European imperialists, therefore, had only a marginal use for the christian missionary. He could be used to beguile the natives. But he could not be allowed to dictate the parallel politics of imperialism. Moreover, the East had some highly developed pagan cultures which could discuss on equal terms quite a few fundamentals with the christian fanatics, and which were also not too weak militarily.

The field for the christian politics of conversion has become considerably smaller in Asia due to the resurgence of Islam, and the triumph of Communism in China, North

Korea, Viet Nam, Cambodia and Laos. If a missionary converts a single muslim in any Islamic country, he is sure to be murdered immediately by a muslim mob, even before the Islamic state has considered the case for his expulsion. Nor can the missionary find a convert in any communist country. He will be immediately caught as an “imperialist agent” and sent to a labour camp. Buddhist Burma has also seen through his game and barred his entry. It is only in India, Ceylon and Japan that the missionary continues to practice his profession effectively. India is perhaps his most fertile field because India has yet to understand the true character of Christianity in spite of the opportunity provided by the missionaries over the past five hundred years.

### **Politics of Conversion Called Islam**

Although Islam entered India some 800 years before Christianity, it appeared on the world scene some 600 years later. By the time Mohammed proclaimed himself a prophet in 610 A.D., the christian politics of conversion had already conquered all those countries in Europe, Asia and Africa which had formed parts of the Roman Empire at the height of its expansion. The Church was casting covetous eyes towards the North and the East in Europe, as towards the sprawling Persian empire in the South-East, seeking fresh pastures for its enthusiastic enterprise. The desert of Arabia did not count for much in the calculations of the Church. Some missionaries had visited the southern parts of the Peninsula and made some converts. But the “chosen ones” had been left to live alone the company of Arab “heathens” and the “accursed Jews” who had quite a few colonies in the oases spread over the central and



northern parts of the desert. Little did the Church suspect that the “heathens” of Arabia were to challenge very soon the christian monopoly of the politics of conversion.

“islam” is derived from the Arabic “sallam” and has been presented to mean “peace” or “surrender”, depending upon the time and place of presentation. In a country and at a time where and when muslims are not in power, it is presented as “peace”. But as soon as the muslims become dominant, it means surrender, and that too at the point of the sword. The surrender is supposed to be made to *allah* the *only* God according to Islam. But *allah* is sure to spurn the surrender unless it is preceded by a surrender to *the* prophet, the sole spokesman for *allah*. In effect, it means a surrender to whichever *mulla* happens to be hailed as the authentic interpreter of the *quran* and the *hadis*, in the eyes of the Sultan who wields the sword, the sole arbiter under Islam in matters moral and spiritual.

While Jesus was not the founder of the Church and had nothing to do with the dogmas of Christianity, the *ummah* or *millat*, which became the vehicle of Islam was founded and given a finished form as well as a fanatic ideology by Mohammed himself. Again, while the personality, preachings and performance of Jesus can be pitted against the Church and its dogma, there is little in Islam which is not derived directly from the personality, preaching and performance of its prophet.

### **Allah and His Prophet**

What exactly happened to Mohammed in the mountain cave outside Mecca has remained a controversial question. We are told by the theologians of Islam that his “experience” is not verifiable by any other human being,



nor is his “revelation” subject to human reason. One has to accept Mohammed’s word that he was the *last* and the *most perfect* prophet, and that whatever he said or did in a state of *wahi* or otherwise was the pronouncement and prescription from “almighty *allah*”.

Those who took Mohammed at his word and accepted his prophethood were acclaimed by him as momins, while those who rejected his mission were denounced as kafirs. The momins did not have to be better men than the kafirs in terms of consciousness or character. They had only to recite the *kalmia*—there is no god but *allah*, and Mohammed is *the* prophet—and they became qualified to kill as many kafirs as they could, or pleased.

*Allah* himself had been a part of the Arab pantheon at Mecca for many centuries past. He had shared his divinity with a large number of other Gods and Goddesses worshipped by the Arabs, and he even enjoyed a certain primacy. The Bedouin, who roamed the desert, flocked to Mecca at appointed times for pilgrimage, and worshipped his Gods and Goddesses with whatever offerings he could spare from his meagre possessions. Neither the Bedouins nor the settled citizens of Arabia had ever suspected that their *allah* was soon going to become the sole cock of the walk, and the cause of a bloody and prolonged strife in many parts of the world.

It is also debatable as to why Mohammed whose *allah* alone, out of a large-sized Arab pantheon. He could have as easily bestowed this singular honour on any other God or Goddess in Mecca, or in the temple of some other town in Arabia. The Gods and Goddesses had obviously no choice in the matter. The only rational explanation is that the sound of the name *allah* was near to the sound of *Elohim*, the God of the Jews. Jesus had also cried out to Eli before

he died on the cross. There are too many Judaic elements in Islam to rule out this explanation. But whatever the reason for Mohammed's choice, there is no reason to doubt that *allah* would not have assumed the status he did without the help of Mohammed. It is small wonder that *allah* in his turn felt so tender towards Mohamed, and proclaimed the latter to be the last and the most perfect prophet in human history.

Things started happening soon after the covenant between *allah* and his *last* prophet was struck in the mountain cave outside Mecca, through the good offices of an angel named Gabriel. The Quraish who were the dominant tribe in Mecca would not have minded a member of their clan acclaiming *allah* as the only God. They were used to such prophets appearing in Mecca and other Arabian towns, every now and then. They were a liberal people in matters of religion and did not mind how a man fancied himself or his god. But they were painfully surprised by the proclivities of this new prophet. He had started frequenting the forum outside the *kaaba* to denounce, in a rather strong language, all that they had cherished so far—their Gods and Goddesses, their cultural traditions, their social system, and what not—day in and day out.

Muslim mullas have made a martyr out of Mohammed during his twelve years of prophethood at Mecca, the same way as the Church has made martyrs out of the early missionaries at Rome. They have also explained away or justified the vindictiveness of Mohammed towards his own people of the Quraish by citing the “many injustices including violence” which Mohammed had “suffered” at Mecca. No contemporary records of the Quraish have survived to tell the other side of the story. But there is

enough in the contemporary Islamic records to clinch the issue as to who was the aggressor and who the aggressed-against. Here was a man sending all ancestors of the Arabs, including his own mother and father, to an eternal hell, and promising the same hell to the present and future generations of the Arabs, unless they accepted him as the *last* prophet of the only *allah*. The Quraish would have been a dead people indeed if they had not reacted, and told Mohammed to leave their city for wherever he could find a more attentive audience.

It is for this “crime” of the Quraish that Muslim *mullas* have blackened the religion and culture of pre-Islamic Arabia as *Jahiliya* (ignorance). The *mullas* forget that the Arabic language which is their proud possession in the *quran* and the *hadis* was not invented by their prophet at the spur of the moment, nor “revealed” by *allah* out of the blue. This rich language had a long ancestry, and reflected the genius of a culture which was deep as well as endowed with diverse dimensions. The pre-Islamic Arabs were a pagan people who allowed a God or Goddess to each according to his or her need and who expected worship from each according to his or her capacity. They had many other qualities of head and heart which the post-Islamic Arab society and culture lost completely.

Islam professes to have brought peace to the warring tribes of Arabia. But its own chronicles tell of nothing except wars, more fierce than ever before, which the Arabs fought, first amongst themselves, and later on with their near and distant neighbours on all sides, soon after they were forced to surrender to Islam.

### **Islam and Christianity Compared**

The Christian Church had taken 300 years to conquer

the Roman empire. The Islamic *millat* triumphed much faster over Arabia—in a matter of 10 years after Mohammed arrived in Yathrib which became known as Medina after a massacre of its Jewish population. But in spite of this difference in time-scale the methods used by the *millat* were more or less the same as were used earlier by the Church. The difference arose because of the different situations in which the two politics of conversion took shape.

The Roman empire was a powerful political edifice. The Church had to build a state within the state before it could subvert Roman society. Arabia, on the other hand, was divided into a number of independent tribal republics, with nothing to share amongst them except a fierce love for local freedom. The *millat* had only to build the apparatus of a centralised state—a reliable revenue system and a standing army—in order to be able to reduce the tribal republics, one by one.

The religious mask worn by the politics of conversion called Islam was also more transparent than the thick veil of verbiage with which Christianity had to decorate itself. Christianity had its beginnings in an environment suffused with sophistry. It had to acquire a similar language and idiom to percolate itself. Islam, on the other hand, was invented in an environment which was simple and straightforward. It could, therefore, advocate the politics of conversion with less hypocrisy and shoot straight from the shoulder.

### **The Momins and Kafirs**

If we leave aside the myths and legends which Islam borrowed from Judaism—lock, stock and barrel—the message of Islam was very simple, almost simplistic.

To start with, it divided Arabian society into two tight compartments—the momins and kafirs, The momins were asked to muster together into a militant *millat*—armed to the teeth, and ready to use force and/or fraud according as occasion demanded. The *millat* surprised the settlements and caravans of the kafirs in a series of armed raids. The kafirs who were always caught unawares had no choice but to surrender, many a time without a single skirmish. The swordsmen of the *millat* selected and slaughtered, in cold blood, all kafirs who were capable of bearing arms. The movable and immovable properties of the kafirs were appropriated by the *millat*. The women and children of the kafirs were captured and sold as slaves or freed for ransom, after members of the *millat* had their pick of the maidens.

Once in a while, the *millat* discovered that the kafirs were in no moode to surrender in spite of the surprise, and that the armed conflict might turn out to its disadvantage. Then the *millat* made overtures of peace on the condition that the kafirs got converted to Islam. The lives and families of the converts were spared but not their properties which were taken away as booty.

The *mullas* take pride that Islam did away with tribal ties and united all Arabs into one solid brotherhood. It must be admitted that the *millat*'s method of doing away with tribal ties was very effective indeed. Quite often, one or more members of a family or tribe happened to be momins, while their other kinsmen were ranged against them as kafirs. The *millat* encouraged a brother to engage his brother in armed combat, so that one of them was sure to get killed. In case of kafirs who had to be slaughtered after the war, the *millat* searched its own ranks for the nearest



kinsmen to perform the 'pious' deed. A *momin* was supposed to retain or recognise no relationship except that of a common creed. All other human ties were now rendered irrelevant.

The momins were, of course, not risking their lives for nothing. Four-fifths of the booty and prisoners captured in a war was their share according to a 'law' laid down by the prophet himself. The prisoners included quite a number of young and fair maidens who could set any momin's mouth watering. No wonder that the infant state of Islam at Medina was able to assemble very soon quite a number of "dedicated" swordsmen without spending a penny from its own coffers. The principles of free enterprise applied to plunder and pillage was functioning with full force.

In case a *momin* got killed in the 'holy war', he was promised a permanent place in heaven. "The blessed", said the *quran*, "will be dressed in silk brocades and adorned with gems. They will recline on couches and be served by handsome youths, and eat from trees bowing down to fill their hands. There will be virgins never yet touched by men or jinn, in beauty like the jacinth and coral stone ... with swelling bosoms but modest gaze, with eyes as fair and pure as sheltered eggs, and bodies made of musk, and free from the imperfections and indignities of mortal flesh." According to one tradition, quoted by Will Durant, each *momin* was promised 72 of these houries, who would never age or stop being solicitous. According to other traditions, the number could be many times more. It was surely not a mean attraction.

The balance one-fifth of the booty and prisoners of war were assigned to the Islamic state which the prophet had set up at Medina to start with and which moved to other



cities in due course, under the caliphs or *amir-ul-mominin*. This one-fifth had to be the pick of the bunch before members of a military expedition could claim their share. No wonder that the Islamic state at Medina was very soon rolling in riches. The wealth which flowed to the Islamic state in later times grew progressively in volume and variety, and the stage was set for the flowering of that Islamic “culture” in which the *millat* takes such mighty pride. The prophet and the earlier caliphs, who controlled and commanded these riches, were inclined to lead a life of “poverty”. This “piety” impressed the momins who had to be satisfied with much less, and served to create many myths about Islamic “ideal of equality”. The “equality” never made any difference to the despotic power which the prophet and, later on, the caliphs had at their disposal.

### **Sweep of the Islamic Sword**

The prophet of Islam had proclaimed that *allah* had assigned the whole earth to the *millat*. Not a patch was to be left for the kafirs to dwell. And no corner of the world was to be bereft of mosques from which the *muezzin* could call the “faithful” to prayer. But it seems that *allah*’s knowledge of geography was not so good. His prophet had not heard of many lands beyonds Syria, Iraq, Iran, Ethiopia and Egypt. He knew nothing about India and the Hindus which want of knowledge was to lead to a heated theological controversy later on.

Notwithstanding this lack of geographical knowledge, the prophet divided the world into two contending spheres—*darul-Islam* (the zone of peace) and *darul-harb* (the zone of war). The inhabitants of *darul-Islam*, that is, the muslims were commanded to wage unceasing war

upon *darul-harb* till the latter was converted into *darul-Islam*. The frontiers of *darul-Islam* were to be pushed progressively in all directions. The theory of Islamic imperialism was thus perfected by the prophet himself, like the latter-day theory of communist imperialism which Lenin elaborated as “international proletarian revolution”.

The whole of Arabia had been terrorized into surrendering to the sword of Islam by the time the prophet passed away in 632 A.D. The militarized *millat* which had “elected” an *amir-ul-mominin* in the same year, now started seeking fresh fields for the mission of Islam. Iran had exhausted herself in an unceasing war with the Roman empire. The provinces of the Roman empire in Asia and North Africa were seething with rebellion against persecution of “heresies” by the Church at Rome which had by now reduced every other ecclesiastical dispensation to a subordinate status. Iran and Roman provinces fell in quick succession after the armies of Islam first found out the feebleness of their defences, and then delivered decisive blows.

Thus, within a hundred years after the death of the prophet, the *amir-ul-mominin* at Damascus became the master of a mighty empire, spread over Spain, Sicily, North Africa, Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Khorasan and Sindh. It was a military triumph unprecedented in human history till that time. The triumph could be easily explained in terms of political and military causes and consequences. But the *mullas* chose to attribute it to the might of *allah* which had been “fully and finally thrown on the side of Islam”. Henceforward, there was no justification for anyone to dwell in the “darkness of *Kufr*”. The “light” of Islam was now accessible to all.

The newly conquered countries were inhabited not by thinly spread-out tribal settlements but by populous societies, urban and rural. It was no more possible for the momins to kill all kafirs who rejected Islam or capture and carry away all their women and children. Besides, the properties which the kafirs possessed, and the lands on which they lived, were so voluminous and vast. The *mullas*, therefore, developed a more elaborate theory of an Islamic state out of the embryo of principles which the prophet had already propounded.

The *millat* led by the *amir-ul-mominin* was, of course, the master class under the Islamic state. But this state had a mission larger than providing power and privilege to the *millat*. The state had to see to it that the kafirs who had been conquered were brought into the fold of Islam as fast as possible. The kafirs were, therefore, given, a new status—that of zimmi to start with. The zimmi were allowed to live under the aegis of an Islamic state, provided they agreed to pay *jiziya* (poll-tax) and other discriminatory taxes, and accepted a status of second class citizens placed under draconian disabilities. It was expected that the burden of taxes and the disgrace of disabilities would force the kafirs to get converted to Islam before long. The expectation was more than fulfilled in most countries except India and Spain. The kafirs in other countries were not only converted to Islam but were also brainwashed to fulminate against their own forefathers and forget that they had been conquered by a foreign race and creed.

The *mullas* applaud the concept of a *zimmi* and describe it as a privileged position because, “unlike the momins, the zimmi are exempted from military services”. It is difficult to know how the *mullas* arrived at this self-congratulatory

conclusion. They certainly did not consult any *kafir* to find out if he wanted to become a *zimmi* and be “exempted” from military service. The whole thing looks like a deliberate device adopted in order to disarm and emasculate a subject population. People who could not bear arms were in no position to defend themselves against Islamic barbarism which became more pronounced with the passing of every day, in direct proportion to the establishment of “peace” under the Islamic state.

The Islamic state allowed some time to the kafirs to “mend” their ways and receive the “true revelation”. But it had no patience for the religious and cultural institutions of the kafirs. It systematically destroyed and desecrated the temples and shrines of the kafirs, killed their priests, burnt their scriptures as well as secular literature, closed their schools and monasteries and heaped insult and injury on every precept and practice that they had cherished so far. It completed the job of “cleaning up” the scene as thoroughly, if not more, as the Christian Church had done earlier. The conquered lands were at the same time “adorned” with mosques, mazars and khanqahs in which the *mullas* mugged up the *quran* and the *hadis*, and the Sufis sermonized on the maqams they had “attained”.

### **Islam: An alibi for Arab Imperialism**

For several centuries after its advent, Islam was an alibi for Arab imperialism. And it was an imperialism of a type which the world had not known so far. The Arabs not only imposed their ruthless rule and totalitarian creed on the countries they conquered; they also populated these countries with a prolific progeny which they procreated on native women. Every Arab worth his race “married” scores,

sometimes hundreds of these helpless women. Divorce of a wedded wife had been made very easy by the “law” of Islam. A muslim male could go on marrying and divorcing at the rate of several women during the span of a single day and night. What was still more convenient, there was no restriction on the number of concubines a muslim male could keep. The Arab conquerors used these male privileges in full measure. And in a matter of a hundred years, Iraq, Palestine, Syria, Egypt and North Africa, which had been non-Arab countries for countless ages, became Arab countries in race, language and culture. Conversion was not confined to creed alone; it covered one’s blood as well.

The Arab power declined in due course. The mission of Islam was next taken over by the Turks whom the Arabs had converted earlier. It was the Turks who succeeded where the Arabs had failed—conquering Asia Minor, invading Central Asia, India and Eastern Europe. Asia Minor was wrested from Christianity, converted *en masse*, and populated by a prolific Turkish progeny. It is known as Turkey to-day. Central Asia, which was already Turkish, became Islamic as well. It was only in India and Eastern Europe that the Turks failed in the final round. But in both places, they crystallized colonies of native muslims to carry forward the politics of conversion under changed circumstances. The success achieved by this Islamic politics of conversion has been quite significant in India so far. How far that politics will progress in future depends upon whether Hindu society understands it or not, *at present*.

### **The Situation of Hindu Society Today**

The state of Hindu society today presents a close parallel to the state of pagan societies in ancient Europe,



Asia and Northern Africa, on the eve of their subversion by politics of conversion called Christianity and Islam.

The pagan societies of the ancient world were also pluralistic societies like the Hindu society, accommodating several streams of social, cultural and spiritual traditions and allowing a large measure of autonomy to their constituent units. And like the Hindu society, these pagan societies also reacted instinctively against totalitarian ideologies like Christianity and Islam.

But these pagan societies were betrayed by their elite which had become spiritually bankrupt, morally neutral and intellectually devoid of discrimination—in short, self-forgetful and self-alienated. Hindu society to-day is being betrayed in a similar manner by its own elite.

The Hindu masses suspect the slogan of *sarva-dharma-sambhava* in the context of Islam and Christianity, and resist it instinctively. The instinct is very sound because it is supported by the historical experience of what the Hindus have suffered at the hands of these two political ideologies which came from outside, and as accomplices of imperialist invaders. It is the Hindu elite who must take full “credit” for circulating as genuine the counterfeit creeds of Islam and Christianity.

The elite was expected to know better, and in a more systematic manner, the true character of Christianity and Islam. The Hindu scholar was expected to study first-hand the “scriptures” and theologies of these two “religions”, and compare them with his own scriptures and philosophies. The Hindu historian was expected to survey and evaluate the record of these “religions” in countries and continents they had conquered. But the Hindu elite has failed to do its duty towards his society, culture and country.



Most of the time, the Hindu elite is either too pious to believe that “real” religion can be a cause for social or political discord; or too trusting to question the exclusive claims of any creed; or too devoid of discrimination to discern the fundamental difference between *Sanatana Dharma* on the one hand, and Islam and Christianity on the other; or too indifferent towards religion to count it as a subject of serious study; or too “forgiving” or too preoccupied with his “leadership of all sections of the Indian people” to notice any sentiments or susceptibilities which may divide them. In most members of the Hindu elite the psychological motive is mixed. But in every case the end result is the same—to be impervious to the continuing aggression from Islam and Christianity.

Some sections of the Hindu elite have become too self alienated to really care for the welfare of the society which gave them birth and brought them up. Most of the time they harbour a deep-seated animus against everything Hindu, and let no opportunity pass to harangue against their own heritage. They are the most privileged sections under the present dispensation, with whom it is difficult to have a dialogue on matters of life and death for Hindu society. They dismiss every Hindu cause with a shrug of the shoulders, if not with utter contempt. They are beyond any appeal of reason or evidence. They need psychiatric treatment.

What is worse, the Hindu elite in general is mortally afraid of being called ‘communalist’ by the missionary and the *mulla* or the muslim and christian elite which functions from all political platforms pledged to what passes as secularism in India at present. One is sure to invite this swear-word as soon as one takes cognizance of any Hindu

cause, however legitimate, or questions any claim or “grievance” which the “minorities” may cook up.

And most members of the Hindu elite get frightened out of their wits when the leftists in general and the communists in particular bounce upon them as “reactionary” and “revivalist,” working in league with “capitalism” and “imperialism”, the moment they espouse a Hindu cause.

### **Perverse Scholarship and Journalism**

This atmosphere of self-forgetfulness, self-alienation, self-righteousness and swearology aimed exclusively at Hindu society, has given birth to a brand of scholarship and journalism which always draws wrong, even perverse conclusions from a right array of facts and premises which it itself marshals, many a time quite perceptively. We have witnessed a lot of such “scholarship” and “journalism” in the aftermath of Meenakshipuram. At the back of it all, there is a mind which can be summed up in one sentence—whatever be the facts, its conclusions are the same.

This mind starts by reporting that the spate of conversions to Islam is part of a plan to convert India into a muslim majority country. It quotes *verbatim* the spokesmen of Islam, in India and abroad, to the effect that huge financial resources are being mobilized in all muslim countries to help the conversion of Harijans. But it ends by citing the actual figures of Harijans converted in this or that town or village, and dismiss the whole affair as too small to justify the “hue and cry which the Hindus have raised”. In the final round, this mind concludes that short-term statistics are more meaningful than the long-term strategy.

This mind starts by warning Hindu society that this society is in for serious trouble unless it secures social justice for its underprivileged sections. But as soon as it finds that the RSS, the Vishva Hindu Parishad, the Mathadhipatis and the Arya Samaj—the only organisations which work for the welfare of Hindu society—have entered the field for ensuring social justice to the Harijans, it starts shrieking about a “Hindu backlash” which endangers “communal harmony”.

This mind ridicules the Vishva Hindu Parishad for expressing satisfaction that the tide of mass conversions has been contained. It also quotes the spokesman of *Ishathul Islam Sabhai* of Tamil Nadu to prove that many more thousands are waiting to get converted in the next round, which may not be far off. But it sees a danger to secularism if the Vishva Hindu Parishad takes its warning seriously and starts putting in more effort.

This mind cites some significant instances of Harijans having committed atrocities on caste Hindu. It reports that quite often the caste Hindus who came in conflict with the Harijans were only slightly higher than the Harijans in the Hindu caste hierarchy. Its own analysis proves conclusively that the Harijans who clamour the loudest in favour of conversion belong, not to the lower strata of Harijan communities but to the prosperous and privileged Harijan elite which has emerged through the prevalent political process. Yet it concludes that there seems to be no other way of securing social justice from the “upper caste Hindus” except through conversion, and cites several authorities including Dr. Ambedkar in support of this conclusion.

This mind discovers through its own field-survey that most stories of police atrocities on Harijans are pure

concoctions, and that quite often the police saved the Harijans from the wrath of another community which the Harijans had wronged. It probes into to motives for conversion and finds that in most cases they are quite low such as the lust for a second “wife”, or the lure of gifts and employment in Gulf countries, or fear of conviction for crimes committed. It quotes those instances to prove that the muslims can always give a communal turn to any attempt by the police to arrest a criminal who has got converted to Islam in the meanwhile. Yet, when the same facts are cited by some Hindu leader or organization, this mind starts smelling “Hindu communalism trying to distort some significant sociological phenomena”.

This mind is on record for pressing the point that Kanyakumari district was a paradise of communal peace before the RSS and “other Hindu communal organizations” became active in that area. But it refuses to read the history of christian proselytization spread over several centuries as a result of which this district has become a christian majority district, so much so that the christians are emboldened to demand a change of its name from Kanyakumari to Kania Maria. An aggression which was not challenged was no aggression at all, according to the “moral” perceptions of this mind. On the contrary, the aggressor is he who challenges the aggression and tries to undo the wrongs perpetrated in the past.

To sum up, this mind sees India as a conglomeration of communities- Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, Jats, Yadavs, Lingayats, Ezhvas, Harijans, Caste Hindus—and addresses them all from its olympian heights of secularism, national solidarity, non-violence, *dharma*, and so on. It can never find anything to choose in the “unseemly” quarrels of these communities, whatever be

the nature of conflict or whoever may be the aggressor. If it is pointed out to this mind that the Hindus should not be thus divided into diverse communities, and that however divided the Hindus may be, they still constitute the nation in the only Hindu homeland, it gets alarmed by what it describes a “Hindu chauvinism,” and calls upon all “secular forces” to come together to save “our composite culture from an imminent danger.”

And in the midst of all its contradictions, this mind has a constant—for it, the Hindus must always be in the wrong, and the “minorities” must always have justice on their side.

The dominant Hindu elite and its confused, contradictory and, many a time, cowardly scholarship have become irrelevant, if not sinister, in the present situation when the politics of conversion has come out in the open, and is becoming progressively more powerful. A new and ideologically equipped Hindu elite has to emerge and restore the perspective if Hindu society has to be saved from the machinations of this politics.